

skirmish

THURSDAY, 27 NOVEMBER 2008



by RENEE LIM



It was a bustling affair at United Square when teams from all over Singapore dropped by for Skirmish 2008. Organised by Heartware Network, Skirmish was a friendly competition leading up to FIRST LEGO® League (FLL), a robotics competition spanning 6 continents. Volunteers and staff arrived bright and early to begin the arduous task of unloading the mission models and setting up the tournament tables for the event.

By 12.30 pm, our volunteers and staff were on standby, eagerly waiting in anticipation for the teams to arrive. And arrive they did, all geared up and ready to go. As more teams filed into the competition area, the incessant buzzing got much louder and the air was bristling with excitement. Just being there watching the teams got my own adrenaline level pumping and I could hardly wait for Skirmish to begin.

Once the teams were given the green light to go, they immediately rushed off to test their robots out on the tournament tables. I was already bowled over by the robots which were by far, the most impressive ones I have ever seen. Also, observing them piqued and re-kindled my interest in robotics for it is pretty amazing to observe how technology has aided the evolution of simple toys into complex machines. Besides the awe of the robots, what surprised me more was the dogged tenacity of the participants. Simply watching the participants test their robots on the field, run back to make adjustments then going back to the fields again to test their robots countless times already tired me out, but they just kept going at it non-stop.



REFLECTIONS OF SKIRMISH

Another aspect of FLL that came through was the cohesiveness of the teams and how the children were able to work well together. As timekeeper, I was able to observe them from close quarters and that allowed me to experience first-hand how every single child was involved in the games and how very seriously they took the competition. I must admit, it was inspiring to see the young children there with their robots, working so hard and so determinedly, all united with one common goal in mind, the FLL Championship Tournament.



Besides the many teams, Head Referee Mr Eric Tan and guest Mr Kang, Head of Elpmis International Pte. Ltd. also came down to kindly answer the barrage of questions thrown at them regarding the rules of FLL and to help teams clarify any problems they faced about the competition. Their expertise helped both the participants and as well as the volunteers better understand FLL and was greatly appreciated.



Lastly, volunteers and staff were debriefed. We consolidated our ideas and worked on suggestions for improvement so as to make FLL an even more successful and enjoyable event for the competitors and volunteers alike.



Through my participation at the Skirmish, I have certainly learnt a lot more about FLL, its missions, rules and grilling competition itself, but more importantly, the spirit it encompasses and the very reason it was created in the first place.

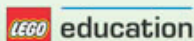
Renee is a volunteer intern with Heartware Network. She is currently studying at Raffles Girls' Secondary School



Skirmish Venue Sponsor:



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The FIRST LEGO® League (FLL) tournament will be held on **11 Jan 2009**, at the **National Library building (Victoria Street)**. 80 teams and mentors will vie for the honour to represent Singapore at the world LEGO festival in Atlanta. Last year's global winner was a combined team of young people from Singapore. Each year, more than 135,000 children from 40 countries participate in the FLL.

This year, the competition's highlight is the **business prize of \$10,000** (up to \$50,000 if the idea is scalable) for business capital and mentoring by a local entrepreneur. This will be given to the team with the most viable research paper that can be turned into a sustainable business ... a first of such initiative in the competition's 10-year history.

The FLL Challenge calls for teams of 9 to 16 year-olds to research and present creative applications of solutions to improve people's lives. This year's competition theme is "**Climate Connections**".

For more information, visit www.heartware.org or email fil@heartware-network.org
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Heartware Network is the national FLL Operational Partner for the territory of Singapore.